

Single Point of Entry: Frequently Asked Questions

1. I am interested in opening a group home for youth. What is my first step?

First you must identify what type of group home you would like to open.

If you are interested in opening a group home that would be licensed by The Department of Human Resources (DHR) or the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) (see the next question) you need to determine if either agency has issued a Statement of Need (SON) Human Services Article §8-703.1. Effective October 1, 2008 DHR and DJS must issue a SON which is an official certification of public need for the location and establishment of a residential child care program. A proposal may not be submitted to the Governor's Office for Children until DHR or DJS has issued a statement of need for a residential child care program in a county.

If a SON is issued or you are interested in opening a group home licensed by The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) (see the next question) the next step is to attend a Single Point of Entry (SPE) Training that provides instruction on the proposal, licensing, rate setting, and contracting processes.

2. What types of group homes are licensed by DHR, DJS, and DHMH?

DHR Licenses the following types of group homes:

- Independent Living Programs
- Shelter Care
- Regular Group Homes
- Respite Care
- Teen Mother Baby Programs
- Treatment Foster Care

DJS Licenses the following types of group homes:

- Regular Group Homes
- Secure Group Homes
- Shelter Care

DHMH Licenses the following types of group homes:

- Residential facilities for children with developmental disabilities
- Therapeutic Group Homes

3. What is the Single Point of Entry?

The Single Point of Entry is a central point of information and referral for persons or organizations who are interested in providing residential services to children, youth and their families. It is located in the Governor's Office for Children. Staff of the Governor's Office conducts the Single Point of Entry Information Meeting for Children, four times per year. Attendance is required at this meeting for all persons interested in operating a residential child care facility. There is a limit of 2 persons per program that can attend each Single Point of Entry meeting. Registration is done online. Confirmations will be sent by electronic mail prior to the meeting date.

4. What happens after I attend a Single Point of Entry meeting?

After attending the Information Meeting, you will be issued a logon and a password needed to submit a proposal online. This proposal will be a detailed plan describing your intended program following the guidelines in the Proposal Outline and the COMAR regulations. You will have up to 12 months after attending a Single Point of Entry Information Meeting to submit a proposal.

5. What happens after I submit my proposal to the Single Point of Entry Manager?

Within 90 days of receiving it, the Single Point of Entry Manager will put your proposal through a rigorous examination. After the review, you will either be asked to provide additional information, or your proposal will be forwarded to the appropriate licensing agency. If you are asked to provide additional information, you will be asked to submit it within 60 days of receipt of the letter or the State will consider your proposal withdrawn. The entire process - including the review of the proposal and any proposal revisions by the Governor's Office for Children, and the process for obtaining a license by one of the licensing agencies – can take up to one year or longer. The length of time for the entire process will depend on the quality of your proposal submission.

6. How long does my proposal have to be?

There is no limit on the length. You will need to follow the Proposal Outline and the COMAR regulations (14.31.06). Be sure to complete and submit the Proposal Face Sheet, answer the questions asked in each section providing a description of your program, and submit any required documents (such as a resume for the proposed Program Administrator).

7. What qualifications must the Program Administrator of the group home possess?

According to the COMAR regulations (14.31.06.06), the Program Administrator must have all of the following qualifications to serve in this capacity: "A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and at least 3 years experience in the human services field, with at least 2 of the years in a supervisory or administrative capacity; OR a master's degree from an accredited college or university and at least 1 year experience in the human services field in a supervisory or administrative capacity." Effective October 1, 2007, the Program Administrator will have to be certified. The state is now in the process of developing the certification and testing requirements. However, the educational and experience requirements will change to a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and at least 4 years experience in the human services field, with at least 3 of the years in a supervisory or administrative capacity; OR a master's degree from an accredited college or university 2 years experience in the human services field, with at least 1 year experience in the human services field in a supervisory or administrative capacity.

8. What are some good rules to follow in developing my proposed program?

You should look at your proposal as your business plan. Give some thought to your vision for your program. Your completed proposal should be a picture of what your program will look like and what it will take to operate it. It should cover all aspects of your business such as: description of your program, operational plan, description of staff and their duties and responsibilities, services offered, start-up budget and operational budget. Please be sure to read through your proposal thoroughly before submission.

9. What are some questions I should ask myself about starting a program?

- Is the facility or program that I propose needed?
- Is the program needed in the area where I intend to locate?
- Do I have enough financial resources to start a program? If I am dependent upon loans, will I have the resources to pay them back?
- What is special about my program that will make it attractive to placement workers?
- Do I have the business skills needed to run a small business? If not, whom can I depend upon to help me with the business side?
- Do I have the management skills needed to run a program? If not, whom can I depend upon to help me with the program side of the business?
- Do I have the fiscal skills needed to run a small business? If not, whom can I depend upon to help me with the fiscal part of my program?

10. Does the State provide start-up money?

While the State does not currently provide start-up money, there are plans to provide monetary incentives for providers who are willing to develop programs in underserved areas of the state.

11. How many youth may I have in my program?

There are several factors that determine the maximum number of youth you may have in your program. These factors include the Fair Housing Act as amended in 1988, COMAR regulations, fire authority, and health and safety.

12. Must I allow family involvement?

You must allow parental involvement, unless the Courts prohibit it. Parental involvement can include: family counseling and visitation. It is important that parents and families be recognized because they are one of a child's greatest resources and should be treated accordingly. The specifics of parental involvement should be discussed with the placement agency and spelled out in the treatment plan.

13. Is operating a residential child care facility like foster parenting?

Operating a residential child care facility is a business. It involves providing group care for youth with a formal program of basic care, social work and health care services. It requires administrative, supervisory skills, as well as service delivery in a highly formalized structure. It requires having a reserve of three to six months operating expenses in the bank.

14. How many group homes may I open?

As a new entity, licensing agencies will be interested in how you succeed with one program, initially. When licensed, if the program is successful in its initial operation (a period of approximately 15-18 months), you may apply for a license for another facility.